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Spears, R.; Doosje, B.J.; Ellemers, N.

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Russell Spears, Bertjan Doosje and Naomi Ellemers

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Self-Stereotyping in the Face of Threats to Group Status and Distinctiveness: The Role of Group Identification

Russell Spears
Bertjan Doosje
University of Amsterdam
Naomi Ellemers
Free University, Amsterdam

In four studies, effects of self-perceived or public-perceived threats to group status or group distinctiveness on self-stereotyping (defined as similarity to prototypical in-group members) were investigated for people with high or low in-group identification. The main prediction was that high and low identifiers will respond differentially when their group's status or distinctiveness is threatened such that self-stereotyping is reduced for low identifiers but enhanced for high identifiers. Although the four studies investigated different comparison groups and different kinds of group threat, the results of all studies provided support for the prediction, and this was confirmed by a meta-analysis. This supports the authors' argument that the initial level of group identification determines whether group members are likely to set themselves apart from the rest of their group or to show group solidarity when their identity as group members is threatened.

This article examines the consequences of threats to group identity for self-stereotyping. The term *self-stereotyping* was introduced by self-categorization theorists (Turner, 1987) and has been defined as the perception of the self as a prototypical group member. We follow this definition in terms of general prototypicality rather than focusing on specific traits or attributes (e.g., Dion, 1975) associated with a particular group stereotype. Operationalizing self-stereotyping in terms of general similarity of self to the group prototype (see Simon & Hamilton, 1994) thereby avoids some of the problems surrounding the specificity of self-stereotypes. Whereas the content of self-stereotypes is likely to vary considerably depending on the social comparative context (e.g., Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Hayes, 1992), perceived prototypicality is more general and independent of this comparative context. Self-stereotyping defined in these terms is important because it is the mechanism proposed to underlie conformity to group norms and social behavior (Turner, 1987).

In the present research we consider the effects on self-stereotyping of threats to identity caused by the superior status of a relevant comparison out-group, and also the threat to group distinctiveness caused by the similarity of an out-group. There is now a growing literature on the effects of both of these threats to social identity. However, the dependent variable used in the majority of this research usually concerns some form of intergroup differentiation or discrimination, and the prediction of greater in-group bias as a result of threat has not always been sustained. In the present research we attempt to clarify the effect of such threats to identity by focusing on the degree of self-stereotyping thought to underlie a range of these and other behavioral outcomes. The role of identification as a determinant of self-stereotyping and in determining the particular response to identity threat is central to this analysis.

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Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) asserts that people will positively differentiate their group from a relevant out-group and that this tendency can be explained in terms of the need for a positive social identity (social identity being that part of the self-concept derived from membership of social groups). Because self-esteem is partly derived from social identity, people are motivated to favor the in-group over an out-group. Indeed, this argument is empirically supported by the well-established phenomenon of in-group bias or positive intergroup differentiation in both natural and minimal groups (for reviews, see, e.g., Messick & Mackie, 1989; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Tajfel, 1982). At the same time, however, in some comparative contexts only weak in-group bias or even an out-group bias has been observed (e.g., Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984; Spears & Manstead, 1989; Van Knippenberg, 1984). Thus it seems that mere categorization into groups may not always be sufficient to trigger in-group bias as implied by social identity theory (Rabbie & Horwitz, 1988; Rabbie, Schot, & Visser, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

However, social identity theorists have also argued that a degree of social identification is a prerequisite for group behavior. There is now a considerable amount of research focusing on the proposed relation between in-group identification and in-group bias (for a review, see Hinkle & Brown, 1990). Some of these studies have revealed positive relations between group identification and measures of in-group bias (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Grant, 1993; Kelly, 1988, 1990), as well as other group-related indexes such as effort invested in the group (James & Cropanzano, 1994) and in-group homogeneity (e.g., Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Kelly, 1989; Simon & Pettigrew, 1990). On the other hand, there is also research indicating a nonsignificant or even a negative relation between identification and in-group bias (e.g., Oaker & Brown, 1986; see Hinkle & Brown, 1990). In line with Hinkle and Brown (1990), it can be concluded that there is no evidence of a consistently positive relation between group identification and in-group bias.

One reason for such exceptions could be that social identity theory predicts intergroup discrimination to occur only when the identity of a social group is threatened. For example, it has been argued that members of low-status groups in particular are motivated to elevate their social identities and are consequently more likely to display in-group bias (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, in a recent meta-analysis by Mullen et al. (1992), different patterns were found for real-life and artificial groups in this regard. For members of natural groups, the level of in-group bias did not depend on the relative status position of their group, although there was a slight trend for groups of lower status to display more bias. Members of low-status experimentally created groups, on the other hand, were significantly less likely to favor the in-group than were members of equal- or high-status groups. Thus, in contrast to predictions from social identity theory, it seems that in-group bias cannot be considered a standard or inevitable product of status-related threats to identity.

One of the differences between real and artificial groups may lie in the fact that whereas artificial groups may give group judgments that merely reflect the experimentally imposed status differences, real groups may be more motivated to challenge the existing social ranking of the groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), especially when this is perceived as unstable or illegitimate (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). Perhaps one of the most important differences between real-life groups and experimentally created groups that might contribute to this is the level of identification with one's group (see Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996). It could be argued that members of real-life groups are more likely to be committed to their group than members of artificial groups and are thus more likely to respond to threats to status by displaying in-group favoring biases. Threat to identity may, therefore, lead to in-group bias only for people with a relatively high degree of group identification, resulting in an interaction.

To summarize the picture so far: In-group bias has not always been observed, and when it has, it has not always related to threats to group identity or group identification. One reason for this failure to find a consistent pattern may be the tendency to examine the proposed mediating variables in isolation rather than in combination. Specifically, we would argue that threat to identity and degree of group identification may interact, with both being necessary to produce in-group bias and other related effects and outcomes. Indeed, the effects of identity threat and identification are likely to be mutually reinforcing and bidirectional in the sense that not only may a common threat enhance identification (especially among high identifiers; see Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993) but high identifiers may also be particularly susceptible to a group identity threat. There are a limited number of studies focusing on the interactive effect of threat and identification on in-group bias (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Grant, 1993; Wann & Branscombe, 1990), group cohesiveness (Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984), and group variability (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). Turner et al. (1984), for instance, showed that the "socio-emotional attraction to the group" (i.e., perceiving the in-group as relatively friendly, pleasant, warm, and close, which they labeled *group cohesiveness*) actually increased after failure and defeat, especially under conditions of high initial commitment to the group. Similarly, Doosje, Ellemers, and

Spears (1995) found that high identifiers perceived less variability within both the in-group and the out-group than low identifiers, especially when the relative in-group status was low.

In terms of the literature concerned with in-group bias, a study by Wann and Branscombe (1990) also focused on the effects of group threat and identification. These authors investigated supporters of a college basketball team and made a distinction between *die-hard* and *fair-weather* fans. They showed that the die-hard fans not only were more likely to *bask in reflected glory* (BIRG) after team success (see Cialdini et al., 1976) but also were less likely to *cut off reflected failure* (CORF) after defeat. More specifically, the results show that independent of the result (success or failure), high identifiers experienced greater enjoyment by watching the game than did low identifiers. Thus this study can be seen as demonstrating a main effect of identification on enjoyment, which was not clearly qualified by an interaction with threat. However, a study by Grant (1993) illustrated how group identification can moderate in-group bias in response to threatened identity. In this study, groups of men and women discussed gender issues. Positive intergroup differentiation along gender-stereotypic dimensions was obtained when group identity was threatened, and this was particularly true of people high in gender identification. In another study, Branscombe and Wann (1994) examined the effect of a threat to group identity produced by exposure to a video clip in which the in-group representative either won or lost a world boxing title to a member of the out-group (student participants from the United States watched Rocky fight the Soviet champion in a clip from *Rocky IV*). Although there was a strong correlation between in-group identification and out-group derogation in both the threat and the no-threat conditions, the correlations seemed to be higher under threat. However, it is not clear whether this represented a significant difference. To summarize, although there is support for an interaction effect of group threat and group identification on in-group bias, the number of relevant studies is quite small, and the results are not always conclusive or comparable.

There is another and perhaps more fundamental reason why it is hard to explain variation in the level of in-group bias and to find the critical combination of predictor variables. This reason may lie in the nature of the dependent variable used—namely, reward allocations or some form of evaluative judgments relating to the groups involved. We would argue that such dependent measures may be one step too far removed from the theoretically critical process underlying these effects. According to social identity and self-categorization principles, before in-group bias is likely to occur at all, people must accept and internalize the social identity and ultimately define themselves in terms of the group as prototypical group members. Self-definition and self-stereotyping are therefore likely to underlie subsequent intergroup judgments and behaviors (see also Simon & Hamilton, 1994; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Variation in in-group bias may then be related to the contents of the self-stereotype, which in turn depend on the content of group norms. However, these norms may not always be consistent with in-group bias (e.g., Jetten et al., 1996; Spears, 1995; Wetherell, 1982). In some groups, being fair may be the dominant norm, leading high identifiers to exhibit even less in-group bias than low identifiers. In sum, compared with standard measures of in-group bias, it seems to us that self-stereotyping provides a more general and arguably more fundamental measure that conceptually precedes these other judgmental and behavioral reactions (and potentially helps to explain variation in the form these reactions may take). Therefore, in the present research we focus on self-stereotyping and examine how this varies in response to threats to group identity as a function of group identification.

Self-stereotyping is closely related to group identification processes, such that high identifiers are more likely to perceive themselves in group-stereotypical terms than low identifiers (Turner et al., 1987). In addition, however, we argue that low and high identifiers may opt for different kinds of identity management strategies (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Ellemers, 1993). Low identifiers may be relatively instrumental or self-serving and perceive themselves as representative of the group provided that the identity of the group is not threatened. However, when social identity is threatened, low identifiers may try to distance themselves from the group psychologically or even physically (Ellemers et al., 1993). Enhancing perceived group heterogeneity is an example of an individualistic strategy that enables group members to dissociate themselves from the group (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Doosje, Spears, & Koomen, 1995; see Tajfel & Turner, 1986). High identifiers, in contrast, derive their self-image to a large extent from group membership, and they are less likely to dissociate themselves from the group in the face of threat as this implies denying or rejecting an important part of the self. Such people are therefore more likely to opt for group-level strategies to cope with identity threat and to continue to perceive themselves as representative of their group. Enhancing group cohesion and enhancing group homogeneity are examples of group-level strategies that emphasize solidarity and association with the group (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995).

The present research is designed to follow up and extend the line of inquiry described above concerning the combined effects of threats to social identity and

degree of group identification. The main dependent measure of the four studies concerns self-stereotyping, or the degree to which people see themselves as prototypical for their group. As we have argued, self-stereotyping forms an important intervening variable proposed to precede and accompany a range of other group-based effects including in-group bias and intergroup differentiation (see Turner et al., 1987). On the basis of the theory and research reviewed above, we predict a main effect of identification, as well as an interaction between identification and threat, in the tendency to self-stereotype. Following self-categorization principles, people who identify strongly with their group should display a greater tendency to self-stereotype and see themselves more in terms of the group and its attributes than low identifiers, resulting in a main effect. However, the difference between high and low identifiers should become particularly apparent when social identity is threatened, resulting in an interaction. Under threat, high identifiers should maintain or even increase their level of self-stereotyping because threat is likely to motivate them to defend their identity as group members as well as enhancing the salience of this social identity. Low identifiers, on the other hand, are more likely to dissociate themselves from the in-group in the face of identity threat.

Before we consider relevant literature linking identification to self-stereotyping, it is important to anticipate potential problems arising from the close conceptual relation between these two constructs that might raise some concerns about using identification (albeit in conjunction with identity threat) as an independent predictor of self-stereotyping. Despite this close relation, and following self-categorization theory, we argue that they are distinguishable both conceptually and empirically. In conceptual terms, identification forms a measure of the extent to which individuals identify with and commit themselves to the category as a whole (how it forms a part of themselves), whereas self-stereotyping or prototypicality refers to how individuals regard their relation to the category on category-relevant dimensions in a given context (how they form a part of it). This may seem a subtle difference, but it is an important one; identification is the more motivationally based general predictor of the situation-specific cognitive self-perception in terms of the group attributes (self-stereotyping). It is, therefore, logical that identification items tend to tap the degree of general commitment to the category, whereas self-stereotyping items are more concerned with perceptions of one's position (in terms of similarity/difference) within the category or in relation to prototypical category members. Although we would not argue that identification is a purely fixed individual difference variable (it may also become enhanced under category salience or threat from an out-group), self-stereotyping is more likely to vary with the situational salience of category membership and follow rather than predict the degree of identification. It therefore makes theoretical sense to see identification as the moderator of self-stereotyping, assuming the category is salient (e.g., under threat), rather than the reverse. This predicted moderating role of identification on self-stereotyping as a function of identity threat (i.e., an interaction), also makes the similarity between identification and self-stereotyping less of an issue in the present research.

There is already some general evidence that threat to identity can increase self-stereotyping in research reported by Dion (1975) and Dion and Earn (1975). Threats to the identity of both women (Dion, 1975) and Jewish males (Dion & Earn, 1975), caused by the discrimination of the relevant out-group, resulted in participants characterizing themselves as much if not more in terms of their group stereotypes. However, the stereotypic dimensions in this research were generally positive and independent of the source of threat, so it is theoretically important to assess whether self-stereotyping still increases when the content of the self-stereotype forms the basis of the threatened identity (e.g., lower status of the defining group attributes). Moreover, this research did not distinguish degree of group identification, and the nature of the groups used suggests this may have been generally high. It is an important part of our rationale that we question whether similar effects will obtain for people low in group identification. Specifically, in line with the above analysis, we argue that low identifiers are more likely to respond to identity threat by distancing themselves from the group and reducing any baseline self-stereotyping even further. This results in the predicted interaction between identification and identity threat, with the greatest divergence in levels of self-stereotyping between high and low identifiers under threat, with little or less difference under no identity threat.

As outlined at the start, we prefer to measure self-stereotyping in general terms (perceived prototypicality) rather than in terms of specific traits or attributes, for both theoretical and practical purposes. In line with self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) it is important to distinguish self-stereotyping as a process (perception of self as a prototypical group member) from self-stereotypes as products (concrete instantiations of this process, resulting in the endorsement of particular traits or attributes in a given context). We choose to focus on a general measure because we want to tap the self-stereotyping process rather than its specific content. The prime example cited earlier is the possibility that self-stereotyping can enhance either in-group bias or fairness depending on the specific content of social identity and

its underlying group norms (Jetten et al., 1996). Indeed, it is precisely variation in the joint relation of in-group bias, threat, and identification that forms the motivation for our attempted theoretical reconciliation in terms of self-stereotyping in this general sense.

STUDY 1

In this study we investigated self-stereotyping of high and low identifiers in response to a group threat defined in terms of a relatively low group-status position. Independent of this threat manipulation, we expected high identifiers to display greater self-stereotyping than low identifiers (a main effect). However, we expected this difference to be enhanced by threat (an interaction) because people who feel little involvement with the in-group are more likely to engage in individualistic coping strategies than committed group members. As a result, low identifiers should perceive themselves as less prototypical of the in-group than high identifiers, who in turn were expected to maintain or even enhance their self-image as in-group members when faced with a group threat.

The status position of a group is not always a fixed property of the group but will also depend on the specific comparative context (cf. Ellemers & van Knippenberg, 1997; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). The comparative context consists of two elements that can influence the relative status position: the relevant comparison groups and the relevant comparison dimension. It is, therefore, possible to manipulate the perceived relative status position of the same group by varying both of these aspects of the comparative context. In this study, we exploited this to manipulate threat while holding the in-group constant across conditions.

Method

Participants. In the first study, participants were 187 psychology students of the Municipal University of Amsterdam. Their mean age was 22 years (ranging from 18 to 55); 116 were women and 66 were men (the gender of the remaining five participants is unknown). Participation in this study served as a partial fulfillment of the obligation for first-year students to participate as participants in psychological research. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the conditions. This study was part of a general research session, in which participants had to fill out several other questionnaires as well. These questionnaires were all completed in a large classroom session. After completion of the data collection, all participants received a written debriefing and were thanked for their participation.

Experimental design. In this study, the manipulations of the comparison group and focal comparison dimension resulted in a low-in-group-status or a high-in-group-status condition. Furthermore, on the basis of four in-group identification questions, students were divided into low and high identifiers. This resulted in a fairly equal distribution of participants across the four experimental conditions, $\chi^2(1, N = 184) < 1$, *ns.*

Identification measure. Before explaining the purpose of the study and before presenting the specific comparison group or focal comparison dimension, participants were asked to complete four in-group identification questions (see Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). These questions ("I see myself as a psychology student," "I am pleased to be a psychology student," "I feel strong ties with psychology students," and "I identify with other psychology students") were answered on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) and proved to form a reliable scale ($\alpha = .81$). A median split on the unweighted mean identification score was made, which classified participants as either low or high identifiers.

Cover story and group status manipulation. The questionnaire was introduced as an investigation about students in different disciplines. It was presented as part of an ongoing research project about factors that determine which students are likely to complete their studies successfully. It was explained either that the present study would focus on the comparison between psychology students and physics students or that psychology students would be compared with art students. Then, participants were required to indicate on 7-point bipolar scales to what extent eight related traits could be considered more characteristic for one group or the other. These eight traits either all referred to an underlying dimension of intelligence (e.g., analytic, rational, etc.) or were related to creativity (e.g., spontaneous, resourceful, etc.). When the out-group consisted of physics students and the focal dimension was intelligence, or when comparing psychology students with art students with respect to creativity, participants would have to acknowledge their groups' relative inferiority. Hence both these combinations of comparison group and dimension would constitute the low-status condition. In the high-status condition, the psychology in-group compared favorably with either arts students with respect to their intelligence or, alternatively, with physics students with respect to creativity.

Dependent measures. To measure self-stereotyping, two questions were asked ("I am different from the average psychology student," and "I am similar to the average psychology student"). These questions were answered on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). After recoding the first question, these were combined into an unweighted mean score ($\alpha = 0.65$), so that higher scores denote greater self-stereotyping.

Results

Check on the group status manipulation. We first checked whether participants perceived the comparison with either the physics students or the art students outgroup on intelligence- or creativity-related traits in the intended way. We first recoded the trait ratings, so that the scores ranged from 1 (*more typical for the outgroup*) to 7 (*more typical for the in-group*). The individual trait ratings as well as the overall mean score revealed the predicted pattern of results. By comparison with physics students, participants considered intelligence-related traits less characteristic for their own group ($M = 3.15$), than when the comparison was with art students as an out-group ($M = 4.26$), $F(1, 77) = 52.05$, $p < .001$. In the same vein, creativity-related traits were rated as less characteristic for the (psychology) in-group ($M = 3.22$) when they were compared with art students rather than physics students ($M = 5.16$), $F(1, 89) = 347.03$, $p < .001$. These ratings were not influenced by the degree to which participants identified with psychology students as a group. Thus these results support our assumption that either the comparison with physics students in terms of intelligence or the comparison with art students with respect to creativity turns out unfavorably for psychology students. In the same vein, psychology students perceived the in-group as superior when comparing with physics students in terms of creativity or with art students in terms of intelligence. In further analyses we collapsed the relevant combinations of comparison group and comparison dimension to investigate effects of high versus low perceived in-group status. As a result, the status manipulation was counterbalanced for comparison group and comparison dimension.

Self-stereotyping. As explained earlier, we propose that self-stereotyping and prototypicality are likely to be closely related to group identification, although still conceptually distinct from it. To check this, a principal components analysis was conducted on the self-stereotyping and identification items to assess evidence of this discriminant validity. This analysis did indeed result in a clear two-factor solution, with the first factor explaining 51.2%, and the second explaining 23.8%. Importantly, all identification items loaded highly only on one factor, whereas the two self-stereotyping items had high loadings only on the other factor. Although one of the identification items also loaded highly on self-stereotyping, this is perhaps not surprising given the close relation of these concepts; as might be expected, these factors were moderately (but not highly) correlated: $r = .40$, $p < .01$. The specific factor loadings for this and the other three studies are presented in the appendix. As can be seen, all studies provided a generally similar pattern: A two-factor solution consistently emerged.

A 2 (status: high/low) × 2 (identification: high/low) ANOVA on the mean self-stereotyping score revealed, as predicted, a main effect of in-group identification, $F(1, 180) = 9.95$, $p < .002$. Overall, high identifiers self-stereotyped more strongly ($M = 3.34$) than low identifiers ($M = 2.83$). However, this main effect was qualified by the predicted interaction between identification and group status, $F(1, 180) = 4.34$, $p < .04$. Inspection of the relevant means and analysis of simple main effects revealed the predicted pattern (see Table 1). When the in-group was perceived as having low status, low identifiers saw themselves less as typical in-group members ($M = 2.64$) than did high identifiers ($M = 3.47$), $F(1, 180) = 14.39$, $p < .001$, whereas high and low identifiers showed similar evidence of self-stereotyping in the high-group-status condition, $F(1, 180) < 1$, *ns*. Additionally, self-stereotyping tended to vary with perceived in-group status for low identifiers, $F(1, 180) = 3.55$, $p < .061$, but not for high identifiers, $F(1, 180) = 1.57$, *ns*.

Discussion

This first study was concerned with differences in self-stereotyping as a function of threat to the group's identity (in terms of relative group status) and group identification. It was observed that in general, high identifiers perceive themselves as more prototypical for their group than do low identifiers. As expected, a significant interaction between group status and identification revealed that this pattern was particularly strong when the identity of the group was threatened. Thus it seems that under threat, low identifiers are more likely to opt for the individualistic strategy of dissociating from their group, whereas high identifiers in this same situation are more likely to deal with the threat on a group level and still see themselves as representative of their group.

The results of this study also support our argument that it is possible to manipulate the perceived status position of a real-life social category (in this case, psychology students) by a combination of the comparison groups and the comparison dimension. This manipulation is consistent with the argument made by self-categorization theorists that stereotypic content is not constant but varies with comparative context as determined by the conjunction of the comparison group and the salient comparison dimension (see Oakes et al., 1994). Although we do not wish to argue that this manipulation will have the same long-term effects on the perceptions and behaviors of members of a group with more structural low- or high-status positions, we do think these results demonstrate that it is possible to create (short-term) differences in perceived favorability of the in-group by making particular comparison groups and dimensions salient. The fact that we used different groups and dimensions to obtain a threatening or

TABLE 1: Self-Stereotyping as a Function of In-Group Identification and Self-Perceived In-Group Status, Study 1

	In-Group Status		
In-Group Identification	*Low*	*High*	*Total*
Low			
Mean	2.64_a	3.03_b	2.83
SD	1.10	1.04	1.08
n	51	49	100
High			
Mean	3.47_b	3.20_b	3.34
SD	1.03	1.10	1.06
n	44	40	84

NOTE: Mean ratings could range from 1 to 7; higher numbers indicate increased self-stereotyping. Only cells with different subscripts differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$) in an analysis of simple main effects.

nonthreatening situation for the same in-group further strengthens this argument.

The principal components analysis of the identification and self-stereotyping items provides psychometric evidence that these are different albeit closely related concepts, as reflected in the moderate but not high correlation between the two factors that emerged. The modest relation between these constructs might be of greater concern for the interpretation of the present results if we were simply predicting a main effect of the identification factor. The fact that different levels of identification differentially affect self-stereotyping in response to different circumstances (i.e., emerge as an interaction effect) shows that identification can have effects on self-stereotyping that are not directly entailed in and thus reducible to identification in itself.

In the first study, threat to the group's identity was manipulated by trying to influence the self-perception of the in-group status position in relation to another group. The aim of the second study was to find out whether the effects we observed in the first study could be replicated when differences in group status are not self-perceived but imposed externally. As Tajfel (1984) has noted, relative status is important not only to the extent that it is perceived by the group members themselves but also in terms of the wider legitimacy accorded to such rankings by third parties or the social system generally. The second study, therefore, focused on group identity threats in terms of public-perceived low in-group status position compared with another group. Once again, we were interested in whether high and low identifiers would show different patterns of self-stereotyping in response to the public-perceived status position of their group. We predicted that low identifiers would self-stereotype less than high identifiers. In addition, it was assumed that especially under threat, low identifiers would perceive themselves as less prototypical for their group than would high identifiers.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants. Participants in the second study were 181 psychology students of the Municipal University of Amsterdam. Their mean age was 22 years (ranging from 18 to 49); 117 were women and 64 were men. The conditions under which the research took place were the same as in Experiment 1.

Experimental design. In the questionnaire, the in-group of psychology students was compared with the out-group of business students, a group perceived as similar in terms of size and the general intelligence of its members (see Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). According to the information participants received, the "general public" in the Netherlands considered business students either superior or inferior to psychology students on some relevant dimensions. On the basis of four in-group identification questions, students were divided into low and high identifiers. This resulted in a fairly equal distribution of participants across the four experimental conditions, $\chi^2(1, N = 181) = 1.53$, *ns*.

Identification measure. Participants were first asked to complete the same four in-group identification questions that were used in the first study. Again, these questions constituted a reliable scale ($\alpha = 0.79$). Participants were divided into low and high identifiers on the basis of a median split.

Cover story and public-perceived group status manipulation. The questionnaire was introduced as part of a larger research project investigating the public image of students in different disciplines; the present study would focus on psychology students and business students. It was explained that a previous study had revealed how "the average Dutch person" regarded students in these two disciplines. The purpose of the present investigation would be to find out how psychology students and business students perceived themselves and each other.

Further instructions explained that previous research had revealed that the general public accorded higher status to psychology students than business students, or that business students were perceived as having higher status than psychology students. This was conveyed to the participants by informing them in the high-in-group-status condition that psychology students were considered superior to business students, which was illustrated by referring to their being more pro-social and empathic (traits on which the psychology students tend to be viewed as superior). In the low-in-group-status condition, participants were informed that psychology students were considered inferior to business students, with reference being made to traits such as "go-getting" and

efficient (on which psychology students tend to be seen as inferior).

Dependent measures. After participants had received these instructions, the dependent measures were taken. These consisted of one general measure of self-stereotyping ("I am like the average psychology student") and eight questions measuring self-stereotyping on specific dimensions (e.g., in terms of traits like empathic, efficient, etc.). All the self-stereotyping questions were asked on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). By calculating the unweighted mean of these nine questions, they were combined into one general measure of self-stereotyping ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Results

A preliminary check on the ability of principal components analysis to identify separate identification and self-stereotyping/prototypicality factors was again generally successful (see the appendix). Two factors emerged, one explaining 36% of the variance, the second explaining 14.8%. The items associated with each construct loaded consistently high on the same factor, and the overlap was restricted to one item, resulting in a moderate correlation between the two factors ($r = .37$, $p < .01$).

A 2 (status: high/low) × 2 (identification: high/low) ANOVA on the mean self-stereotyping score revealed the predicted main effect of in-group identification, $F(1, 174) = 12.40$, $p < .001$. As in the first study, high identifiers showed more evidence of self-stereotyping ($M = 3.91$) than did low identifiers ($M = 3.44$). Again, as hypothesized, this main effect was qualified by the marginal interaction between identification and group status, $F(1, 174) = 3.48$, $p < .065$. The relevant means and analysis of simple main effects replicated the findings of Study 1 (see Table 2). As predicted, under public-perceived low status, low identifiers self-stereotyped less ($M = 3.28$) than high identifiers ($M = 4.00$), $F(1, 174) = 14.33$, $p < .001$, whereas there was no significant difference between high and low identifiers in the high public-perceived-status condition, $F(1, 174) = 1.58$, *ns*. Furthermore, self-stereotyping among low identifiers tended to be less in the low-status condition than in the high-status condition, $F(1, 174) = 3.72$, $p < .055$, whereas there was no such difference in self-stereotyping for high identifiers, $F(1, 174) < 1$, *ns*.

TABLE 2: Self-Stereotyping as a Function of In-Group Identification and Public-Perceived In-Group Status, Study 2

	In-Group Status		
In-Group Identification	*Low*	*High*	*Total*
Low			
Mean	3.28_a	3.62_b	3.44
SD	1.05	0.96	1.02
n	45	40	85
High			
Mean	4.00_b	3.84_b	3.91
SD	0.50	0.91	0.92
n	42	54	93

NOTE: Mean ratings could range from 1 to 7; higher numbers indicate increased self-stereotyping. Only cells with different subscripts differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$) in an analysis of simple main effects.

Discussion

In the second experiment, the influence of group identity threat and identification on self-stereotyping was further investigated. Whereas the first study examined the effects of threat in terms of self-perceived low group status, in this second experiment, the manipulation of group identity threat was in terms of a public-perceived status difference between the in-group and a relevant out-group. As was the case in the first experiment, it was observed that overall low identifiers perceive themselves as less prototypical for their group than high identifiers. Although the interaction between identification and group threat reached only a marginal level of significance, analyses of the predicted simple main effects convincingly confirmed that it was only in the threat condition that low identifiers displayed less self-stereotyping than high identifiers.

Taken together, the first two studies indicate that the level of self-stereotyping depends on the group identity threat and group identification. However, in both studies, group identity threat was operationalized in a specific manner—namely, in terms of relative group status position. As Turner (1978) has pointed out, another way in which the identity of the group may be undermined is when its unique position as a distinct group is threatened (see also Brown, 1984; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Brown & Wade, 1987; Diehl, 1990; Worchel, Coutant-Sassic, & Grossman, 1992). The importance of group distinctiveness to group members has consequences for how we address issues of intergroup relations and stereotype change. Whereas originally researchers thought they could change stereotypes and reduce prejudice simply by bringing people of different groups in contact with each other, thereby hoping to break down the barriers between the two groups, it has become increasingly clear that attempts to emphasize integration and similarity can sometimes backfire by threatening group distinctiveness (cf. Hewstone & Brown, 1986). This principle from social identity theory also has close parallels with research proposing a need for uniqueness, both in the interpersonal domain (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) and in the (inter)group domain (Brewer, 1991). Group members have even been known to describe themselves in unfavorable terms as long as this assures them a distinctive group identity and sense of self (e.g., Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996).

In two further studies, which parallel the first two, we focused on threats to distinctiveness of the in-group caused by the similarity of the out-group. In Experiment 3, the distinctiveness threat was self-perceived, whereas in Experiment 4, we focused on public-perceived threat to distinctiveness. Our central assumption was that a similar out-group can pose a threat to identity much as a superior-status out-group can.

Although there are a considerable number of studies that support the prediction of greater in-group bias as a function of the similarity of the out-group (Brown, 1984; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Brown & Wade, 1987; Diehl, 1990; Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1978; Worchel et al., 1992), a recent study by Roccas and Schwartz (1993) is the only one of which we are aware to investigate the particular combination of out-group similarity and group identification central to the present concerns. As predicted, it was observed that in-group bias was highest among high identifiers in the very-high-similarity condition. However, to repeat our argument with respect to our central dependent variable, we consider it important to determine the relation between identification and out-group similarity in terms of self-stereotyping. Once again, the aim was to provide a more direct indicator of the process thought to underlie a range of other group-based effects, and of the individual versus group nature of responses to such threats. As before, we predicted that self-stereotyping would be higher among high identifiers. In addition, we argued that although confrontation with a similar out-group would challenge one's social identity as a member of a distinct group, high and low identifiers would be likely to respond differently to this threat. In line with the responses to group status threat observed in the above studies, we expected that people who feel little involvement with their group would be disinclined to preserve their distinctive group identity when this is undermined and may self-stereotype less as a result. High identifiers, on the other hand, should maintain or even accentuate their self-stereotype as prototypical in-group members when group distinctiveness is threatened.

STUDY 3

Method

Participants. A total of 137 psychology students of the Free University in Amsterdam took part in this study. The mean age of these participants was 21 years (ranging from 18 to 44); 105 were women and 32 were men. The study was conducted as part of a research demonstration in an introductory course in social psychology. The precise research goals and results of the study were discussed extensively in a lecture on intergroup relations in the same course some weeks later.

Experimental design. In this study, the self-perceived similarity of the out-group of business students (similar/different) and the degree of identification with the psychology in-group (low/high) formed the independent variables. This resulted in a fairly equal distribution of participants across the four experimental conditions, $\chi^2(1, N = 137) < 1$, *ns.*

Identification measure. Participants were first asked to complete the same four-item identification questionnaire as used in the first two studies ($\alpha = 0.79$). By means of a median split, participants were classified as either low or high identifiers.

Cover story and self-perceived out-group similarity manipulation. The questionnaire was introduced as part of a larger scale research project into the factors underlying students' preferences for different majors. Subsequently, reference was made to previous research that had investigated in which respects students from different disciplines were similar to or different from each other. It was further announced that the present investigation would focus on two particular groups of students—namely, psychology students and business students—and that the ways in which psychology students and business students were similar to or different from each other had been investigated previously. In the similar-out-group condition, it was explained that, in terms of their background and general interests, business students were quite similar to psychology students and that the present investigation was conducted to find out more about these similarities. In the different-out-group condition, on the other hand, participants were led to believe that psychology and business students were quite different and that the aim of the study was to find out more about the differences between the two groups.

Dependent measures. To measure to what extent participants saw themselves as typical group members, the same two questions as in Experiment 1 were asked ($\alpha = 0.76$).

Results

As in the previous two studies, a principal components analysis demonstrated the ability to distinguish between identification and self-stereotyping factors (see the appendix). The first factor explained 48.6%, and the second factor explained 22.8%. The items associated with each construct loaded consistently high on the same factor, and the overlap was restricted to one item. The two factors were only moderately correlated ($r = .39$, $p < .01$).

A 2 (out-group: similar/dissimilar) × 2 (identification: high/low) ANOVA on the mean self-stereotyping score revealed a strong main effect of the identification factor, $F(1, 132) = 16.72$, $p < .001$, indicating that high identifiers generally self-stereotyped more strongly

($M = 3.67$) than did low identifiers ($M = 2.86$). In addition, the main effect of out-group similarity was marginally significant, $F(1, 132) = 3.73$, $p < .056$. The means revealed a slight tendency for participants in the dissimilar condition to perceive themselves as more prototypical than in the similar condition. Although these main effects were not qualified by an interaction of identification with out-group similarity, $F(1, 132) = < 1$, *ns*, analysis of the simple main effects (see Table 4) nevertheless supported the prediction of most difference under identity threat. They showed that the in-group identification main effect was very strong in the similar-out-group condition, $F(1, 132) = 16.72$, $p < .001$, whereas the difference between high and low identifiers in the absence of a distinctiveness-based threat was much weaker, albeit still significant, $F(1, 132) = 6.20$, $p < .02$. Furthermore, although the level of self-stereotyping among high identifiers was equally low in both similarity conditions, $F(1, 132) < 1$, *ns*, low identifiers tended to show less self-stereotyping in the similar-out-group condition compared with the dissimilar-out-group condition, $F(1, 132) = 3.57$, $p < .061$.

TABLE 3: Self-Stereotyping as a Function of In-Group Identification and Self-Perceived Out-Group Similarity, Study 3

	Out-Group		
In-Group Identification	*Similar*	*Dissimilar*	*Total*
Low			
Mean	2.61_a	3.09_b	2.83
SD	0.85	1.11	1.02
n	36	40	76
High			
Mean	3.59_c	3.79_c	3.67
SD	0.99	1.06	1.02
n	34	26	60
Total			
Mean	3.09	3.36	
SD	1.09	1.14	
n	70	66	

NOTE: Mean ratings could range from 1 to 7; higher numbers indicate increased self-stereotyping. Only cells with different subscripts differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$) in an analysis of simple main effects.

Discussion

In the third experiment, self-stereotyping as a function of group distinctiveness and in-group identification was investigated. It was hypothesized that the confrontation with a similar out-group would lead low identifiers to react in more individual terms (i.e., exhibit less self-stereotyping), whereas high identifiers would still be motivated to perceive themselves as prototypical group members. Although the general pattern of results seems to support these notions, the crucial interaction was not significant. Possibly, the strong main effect of in-group identification and the main effect of out-group similarity made it somewhat harder for the interaction to emerge. However, inspection of the means and analyses of the relevant simple main effects reveal that, as expected, the difference between low and high identifiers with respect to self-stereotyping was stronger in the similar (i.e., threatening) condition than in the dissimilar (i.e., nonthreatening) condition.

In Experiment 3, the manipulation of group distinctiveness was based on group members' self-perceptions. As with the status threat manipulation, we wanted to see whether the out-group similarity effects could also be observed in response to other people's beliefs about the similarity or dissimilarity of a relevant out-group. Therefore, we tried to replicate the predicted pattern of findings of the third study in a fourth experiment, in which we investigated whether public-perceived out-group similarity differentially affected self-stereotyping among high and low identifiers. Thus, as was the case with the first two experiments, our central hypotheses remained the same: (a) We expected high identifiers to self-stereotype more strongly than low identifiers, and (b) we predicted this difference to be more pronounced in the public-perceived-similarity condition than in the dissimilar condition.

STUDY 4

Method

Participants. Participants in the fourth study were 186 psychology students of the Municipal University of Amsterdam. Their mean age was 22 years (ranging from 17 to 48); 128 were female and 58 were male.

Experimental design. In this study, the in-group of psychology students was compared with the out-group of business students. According to the information participants received, the "general public" in the Netherlands considered business students quite similar to psychology students, or they perceived clear differences between business and psychology students. On the basis of four in-group identification questions, participants were divided into low and high identifiers. This resulted in a fairly equal distribution of participants across the four experimental conditions, $\chi^2(1, N = 186) < 1$, *ns*.

Identification measure. The same four in-group identification questions that were used in the three previous studies were asked ($\alpha = 0.79$). Participants were divided into low and high identifiers on the basis of a median split.

Cover story and public-perceived out-group similarity manipulation. These were the same as in the previous experiment, only this time, it was explained that previous research had revealed what image "the average Dutch

person" held of psychology students and business students. Furthermore, participants were either led to believe either that the general public considered psychology students quite similar to business students or that business students were perceived quite differently from psychology students.

Dependent measures. The same two questions as in the previous study were asked ($\alpha = 0.59$) to measure self-stereotyping.

Results

A principal components analysis identified two separate factors: Identification (explaining 48.3%) and Self-Stereotyping (explaining 20.1%). The items associated with each construct loaded consistently high on the same factor, and the overlap was restricted to one item. The two factors were moderately interrelated ($r = .37$, $p < .01$).

A 2 (out-group: similar/dissimilar) × 2 (identification: high/low) ANOVA on the mean self-stereotyping score revealed the predicted main effect of the Identification factor, $F(1, 182) = 15.77$, $p < .001$, indicating that high identifiers generally self-stereotyped more strongly ($M = 3.23$) than did low identifiers ($M = 2.68$). As hypothesized, this main effect was qualified by the marginal interaction of identification with out-group similarity, $F(1, 182) = 2.94$, $p < .09$. Analysis of the simple main effects (see Table 4) showed that the in-group identification main effect could be traced only to the similar-out-group condition, $F(1, 182) = 16.70$, $p < .001$, whereas there was no difference between high and low identifiers in the absence of a group distinctiveness threat, $F(1, 182) = 2.27$, *ns*. Furthermore, although the level of self-stereotyping among low identifiers was equally low in both similarity conditions, $F(1, 182) < 1$, *ns*, high identifiers tended to show even stronger self-stereotyping in the similar out-group condition compared with the dissimilar-out-group condition, $F(1, 182) = 3.15$, $p < .077$.

Discussion

This fourth study focused on public-perceived group distinctiveness and in-group identification as determinants of self-stereotyping. The results of this experiment generally confirm our argument. First, it was observed that self-stereotyping is very closely related to in-group identification, given the strong main effect of this factor such that high identifiers perceive themselves as more prototypical for their group than do low identifiers. Furthermore, this effect was only significant in the similar-out-group condition. In other words, only when the unique identity of the in-group was undermined did low identifiers self-stereotype less than high identifiers. Whereas high identifiers apparently want to make clear they belong to their group when faced with a group similarity threat, under the same conditions low identifiers perceive themselves as less prototypical group members.

TABLE 4: Self-Stereotyping as a Function of In-Group Identification and Public-Perceived Out-Group Similarity, Study 4

	Out-Group		
In-Group Identification	*Similar*	*Dissimilar*	*Total*
Low			
Mean	2.63_a	2.75_a	2.68
SD	0.90	0.98	0.93
n	47	40	87
High			
Mean	3.41_b	3.09_{ab}	3.23
SD	0.86	0.98	0.94
n	48	51	99

NOTE: Mean ratings could range from 1 to 7; higher numbers indicate increased self-stereotyping. Only cells with different subscripts differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$) in an analysis of simple main effects.

META-ANALYSIS

Rationale and Design

Although the four studies reported above employed different manipulations of group threat (self-perceived and public-perceived status threats and self-perceived and public-perceived distinctiveness threats), as well as slightly different measures of self-stereotyping, we essentially predicted the same effects in each study. That is, we expected a general difference between high and low identifiers in self-stereotyping, predicted to be stronger under group threat, as a result of the tendency among low identifiers to show an individual-level response, whereas high identifiers were expected to cope with such threat collectively. Although by and large the four studies seem to yield similar results, the interaction between group threat and in-group identification did not always reach conventional levels of statistical significance, even though the predicted effect consistently emerged in the analysis of simple main effects. However, to test the overall pattern of results more rigorously, we conducted a meta-analysis in which we investigated general effects of in-group identification and group threat (which could stem either from the relative status position of the in-group or from the relative similarity of the out-group) on levels of self-stereotyping in all four studies.

Results

Homogeneity checks. We first tested whether the levels of significance and the effect sizes in the four studies were sufficiently homogeneous to permit generalization across studies. These checks revealed no significant difference in the levels of significance, $\chi^2(3) < 1$, *ns*, nor in the effect sizes, $\chi^2(3) < 1$, *ns*. Thus we may conclude that

the four data sets form a homogeneous sample over which it is possible to generalize ($N = 687$).

Main effects and two-way interaction. The meta-analysis of self-stereotyping across the four studies revealed a significant main effect of in-group identification ($Z = 7.35$, $p = 2.88$ E-13). As expected, the main effect of group threat was not significant ($Z = 0.16$, *ns*). More important, the predicted two-way interaction proved to be significant across the four studies ($Z = 3.30$, $p < .0005$). When we examined the effect sizes (Cohen's *d*), the in-group identification effect ($d = 0.59$) was somewhat larger than the two-way interaction ($d = 0.25$).

Specific contrasts. To investigate the two-way interaction more closely, we also conducted meta-analytic tests for the simple main effects and tested for differences between these simple main effects. Again, the general pattern that emerged from the different studies was statistically confirmed in the meta-analysis. It turns out that all four cells differed significantly from each other (see Table 5). Among low identifiers, self-stereotyping was less under group threat than when no threat was present ($Z = 3.18$, $p < .001$), whereas group threat increased self-stereotyping among high identifiers ($Z = 1.80$, $p < .04$). Thus, although the in-group identification main effect remained significant when no threat was present ($Z = 2.80$, $p < .005$), the difference in self-stereotyping for high and low identifiers was more pronounced under group threat ($Z = 7.62$, $p = 5.10$ E-14). Indeed, although all simple main effects were significant, a comparison of the effect sizes revealed that the identification main effect under group threat was much stronger ($d = 0.61$) than the other simple main effects (identification effect under no threat: $d = 0.22$; threat effect under low identification: $d = 0.25$; threat effect under high identification: $d = 0.15$). Moreover, additional analyses revealed a significant difference between the identification main effects in the threat and no-threat conditions, both in terms of the effect itself ($Z = 3.35$, $p < .0005$) and in terms of effect sizes ($Z = 3.30$, $p < .0005$). The main effects of group threat for low and high identifiers showed no such difference in strength ($Z < 1$, *ns*). In other words, the meta-analysis supports our prediction that, although there seems to be a base-rate difference in self-stereotyping between high and low identifiers, low identifiers set themselves further apart from the group when their identity as group members is threatened, whereas high identifiers show movement toward the heart of the group.

TABLE 5: Meta-Analysis: Weighted Mean Levels of Self-Stereotyping Across Four Studies, as a Function of In-Group Identification and Group Identity Threat

In-Group Identification	*Threat* M	*No Threat* M	*Total* M
Low	2.79	3.12	2.95
High	3.61	3.46	3.53

NOTE: Mean ratings could range from 1 to 7; higher numbers indicate increased self-stereotyping. All cells differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$) in an analysis of simple main effects.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The four studies reported here were designed to demonstrate the role of group identification in self-stereotyping, and more particularly the role of group identification in moderating the effect of threats to social identity on self-stereotyping. Threat was operationalized either in terms of relative group status (Studies 1 and 2) or in terms of the similarity of the out-group (Studies 3 and 4).

Although the effect of identification on a range of group-based effects such as in-group bias, group cohesiveness, and the like has been extensively demonstrated, the relation between identification and self-stereotyping has by contrast received surprisingly little attention, despite the central theoretical position of this relation in self-categorization theory (e.g., Turner et al., 1987). In all four studies reported here, we obtained quite strong main effects of identification such that self-stereotyping, the tendency to see oneself as typical or representative of the group, was consistently higher for high identifiers than for low identifiers. The meta-analysis across studies indicated that this effect was large in size. Given that self-stereotyping can be regarded as the theoretical basis for a range of group effects, ranging from social influence to collective behavior (Turner, 1991; Turner et al., 1987), this finding confirms the central importance of group identification in the phenomenology of the group. A direct empirical demonstration of a relationship between identification and self-stereotyping is important in theoretical terms because it allows one to anticipate variability in the nature and content of group-based effects (such as in-group bias or discrimination; see further below). Moreover, to the extent that self-stereotyping depends on the degree of group identification, the absence of classic group effects is also explicable in terms of low group identification. The tendency for low-status artificial groups to display less in-group bias than those with high status, reversing the trend for natural groups (Mullen et al., 1992), is one candidate for such an explanation (see Jetten et al., 1996). Participants are already likely to have low baseline identification with groups created in the laboratory, and low status can undermine identification even further (Ellemers, 1993). Although addressing this issue was beyond the scope of the present research, studies of intergroup differentiation and discrimination should clearly take absolute levels of identification into account.

A more central and specific focus of the present research, however, concerned how the effects of threats to identity on self-stereotyping might be moderated by the degree of group identification. Our underlying assumption was that low identifiers would be more likely to respond to such threatening social comparisons in an individualistic fashion, whereas high identifiers would opt for a more collectivistic, group-centered strategy. This resulted in the prediction that low identifiers would distance themselves from the group and self-stereotype less when faced with such threats, whereas high identifiers would be less likely to desert their group and might even self-stereotype more if group identity is threatened. Support for this predicted interaction was less strong than that for the main effect of identification, although conventional or marginal support was found for it in three of the four studies. Moreover, the predicted simple main effect of identification in the threatened condition was reliably significant across all studies, whereas the same comparison in the nonthreatened condition was not. Finally, meta-analytic procedures revealed both the interaction and the predicted simple effect to be reliable, and based on a homogeneous sample of tests. These data, therefore, give further confidence in concluding support for the predicted role of identification in the face of threat.

Despite the homogeneity of the effects, the manipulations of threat across the four studies varied in a range of subtle and less subtle ways, suggesting that the differential effect of identification may be fairly robust and generalizable. In the first study, we manipulated threat to identity in a novel fashion, by manipulating in combination the comparison group and dimension such that perceivers would draw the conclusion that their group was clearly inferior or superior on that focal dimension. This study used the fact that self-stereotypes and, therefore, perceived status are relational concepts that depend on the specific comparison group and dimension in question (see Oakes et al., 1994). This manipulation also suggests that the effects of status threat investigated here may be more commonplace and situationally determined than suggested by more fixed or rigid definitions of stereotypes and status. In the second study, rather than requiring the participants to perceive this status relation themselves, we merely suggested that the status difference with a relevant out-group was the perception of the public (rather than necessarily something based in reality). It appears that this public perception was sufficiently threatening because it resulted in a similar pattern of results to the first study, with a reliable differences in self-stereotyping between high and low identifiers under these conditions.

In the remaining two studies, we moved even further away from our original straightforward conceptualization of status-based identity threat to see whether the hypothesized interaction would obtain for quite a different and arguably more subtle threat to social identity. This concerned the threat to group distinctiveness caused by the perceived similarity of the relevant comparison out-group. Previous research in the social identity tradition has shown that group similarity can lead to a competitive comparative relation between groups and result in positive differentiation to maintain group distinctiveness (e.g., Brown, 1984; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Roccas & Schwarz, 1993; Turner, 1978). We reasoned that similarity would therefore constitute a threat to identity, even though it has no necessary implications for the relative status or standing of the groups, and we predicted similar interactions with identification as before. In Study 3, there was little evidence of this interaction, although the predicted simple main effect of in-group identification in the similar (threat) condition was most reliable. It is possible that this manipulation was weaker than the more direct status comparison. However, the relative strength of the identification main effect, and the somewhat lower power compared with the other studies, may also have contributed to the absence of the overall interaction effect. The final study in which, analogous to Study 2, the similarity between the groups was ostensibly perceived by the public rather than self-perceived did result in a trend for the predicted interaction and once again in a reliable simple main effect of identification in the threatened condition. In sum, there appears to be some evidence that threatening identity by means of undermining the distinctiveness of the group can have effects similar to the direct status threat, in terms of the differential self-stereotyping of high and low identifiers. The overall homogeneity of the results from the meta-analysis also supports this conclusion.

The results from these four studies taken together demonstrate the importance of group identification in determining responses to threats to identity in terms of self-stereotyping. The response of low identifiers in effectively distancing themselves from the group or its central tendency can be seen as a relatively individualistic identity protection strategy, somewhat akin to the social mobility strategy identified by social identity theory (see Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) or the strategy of overestimating group heterogeneity (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Doosje, Spears, & Koomen, 1995). The response of high identifiers, on the other hand, is more collectivistic and loyal to the group. It is perhaps logical that people who identify strongly with their group should resist distancing themselves from it,

but it is less self-evident that they should be inclined to close ranks in the face of threat. This latter effect would account for the tendency in three of the four studies to self-stereotype even more under threat, confirmed in the meta-analysis.

It is important to relate these individualistic and group-level strategies to the strategies of basking in reflected glory (BIRG) and cutting off reflected failure (CORF; Cialdini et al., 1976). Compared with social identity theory, these strategies do not make clear the individual versus group levels of self-definition but are more concerned with instrumental strategies adopted by the individual to benefit from or avoid the consequences of positive and negative group status, respectively. An important advance of the present research, then, in common with the work of Wann and Branscombe (1990), is showing that high identifiers, unlike low identifiers, are prepared not to CORF in the sense that they stick by their group when its status is threatened and even describe themselves as more similar to it. In this sense, our social identity approach, like that of Wann and Branscombe, moves beyond a purely individualistic analysis based on personal self-enhancement or self-protection.

It is also important to relate our findings in terms of self-stereotyping to other group-relevant measures and outcomes. The similarity of this interaction with our earlier research on in-group homogeneity estimates as a function of status and identification (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995) highlights the close parallels between measures of in-group homogeneity and self-stereotyping (in the earlier study, we also demonstrated the same interaction for measures of out-group variability). Indeed, research on stereotyping has increasingly embraced measures of group variability as well as measures of central tendency in the conceptualization of the stereotyping process (e.g., Park, Judd, & Ryan, 1991). In the present research, we have defined self-stereotyping in terms of one's similarity to the group (i.e., prototypicality). However, if it is true that the image of the group contributes to one's social identity, as social identity and self-categorization theories argue, then variability judgments may have similar effects to self-stereotyping as defined here. Specifically, perceived variability as well as the central tendency information contained in perceived prototypicality may contribute to the tendency to conform to in-group stereotypes in one's behavior. That is, conformity to group norms may be enhanced not only to the extent that one sees oneself as similar to the group but also to the extent that one sees one's group as homogeneous and thus as prescribing a clearly defined group norm. By way of comparison, the self-categorization explanation of group polarization involves the convergence of group responses (i.e., homogeneity) as well as moving one's own standpoint toward the prototypical group position (Turner et al., 1987). It is, therefore, quite logical that the combination of threat and identification produces similar effects on both perceived group variability and self-stereotyping (defined in terms of similarity to the in-group), as these are two closely related but distinct aspects of the stereotyping process in general.

Behavioral outcomes such as in-group bias are also likely to covary with the degree of self-stereotyping as measured by these two general indicators (similarity to and homogeneity of the in-group), but it is crucial to our argument that the nature of such outcomes should be mediated by conformity to the content of situation-specific social identity or group norms. Although in-group bias seems to be a typical group-level response (by conveying a general advantage to the group), it is quite possible to conceive of circumstances in which committed group members would consider in-group bias quite inappropriate—namely, when this runs counter to group norms of fairness (see Jetten et al., 1996; Spears, 1995). Under these conditions, increased group identification may actually predict less in-group bias. Thus whereas the *intensity* of behavior is likely to be predicted by the "contentless" indicators of general self-stereotyping and enhanced homogeneity, the *sort* of behavior displayed should be determined by the content of group norms as identified in the specific social context. This argument applies equally to self-stereotyping in terms of particular traits or attributes as well as discriminatory behavior. Assuming there is consensus about the prototypicality of particular traits or behaviors in a specific comparative context, the general indicator of prototypicality should also predict increased self-stereotyping and behavior in line with these specific traits or behaviors. It should also be possible to predict shifts in the specific contents of self-stereotyping as the comparative context changes (see Haslam et al., 1992).

This research reaffirms that for some, the group can form an important part of self-definition, more than simply constituting a collection of individuals one can choose to walk away from at will. The contrasting responses of low identifiers demonstrate that making a social identity salient will not always lead to self-stereotyping or (by implication) other group-level effects. Our research points to the importance of individual variation in initial identification and the opportunity for "individualism" within the group. One should, therefore, be wary of "grouping" together all those in the group. When the going gets tough, this may bring out not only "the group within the individual" for some, but also the "individual within the group" for others. An analysis in terms of group identification helps us to understand this distinction and the diverse behavior that may result from it.

APPENDIX

Factor Loadings on Factor 1 (Identification) and Factor 2 (Self-Stereotyping) After Varimax Rotation, Studies 1 to 4

	Study 1		*Study 2*		*Study 3*		*Study 4*	
	F1	*F2*	*F1*	*F2*	*F1*	*F2*	*F1*	*F2*
Ident. 1	.85	—	.85	—	.90	—	.87	—
Ident. 2	.88	—	.78	—	.88	—	.83	—
Ident. 3	.76	—	.78	—	.67	—	.72	—
Ident. 4	.45	.73	.57	.47	.43	.66	.61	.53
Self-St. 1	—	.88			—	.84	—	.79
Self-St. 2	—	.87	—	.59	—	.87	—	.81
Self-St. D. 1			—	.66				
Self-St. D. 2			—	.65				
Self-St. D. 3			—	.67				
Self-St. D. 4			—	.62				
Self-St. D. 5			—	.68				
Self-St. D. 6			—	.70				
Self-St. D. 7			—	.63				
Self-St. D. 8			—	.67				

NOTE: Ident. = identification; Self-St. = self-stereotyping; Self-St. D. = Self-stereotyping on a specific dimension. Only factor loadings higher than .40 are presented (— indicates that the loading was not sufficiently high). A field is left blank if an item was not measured in a study.

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